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CONTENTS

Cambodia: The Communists continue to harass government positions south of Phnom Penh. (Page 1)

South Vietnam: Recent demonstrations by veterans apparently have convinced the government to adopt tougher measures. (Page 2)

Communist China: Peking has taken the final step in normalizing the military high command. (Page 3)

Jordan: Amman remains generally quiet but tense. (Page 5)

USSR - Communist China - UN: Moscow has increased its backstage efforts to keep Peking out of the UN. (Page 6)

Chile: Congress will have to choose between Allende and Alessandri. (Page 7)

Bolivia - Latin America: There is increasing evidence of international participation with the Bolivian guerrillas. (Page 8)

[Redacted]

25X1

Ceylon: Western-owned oil companies apparently have agreed to nationalization of their properties. (Page 10)

[Redacted]

25X1

Arab States: Moderates growing pessimistic (Page 12)

Approved For Release 2003/10/01 : CIA-RDP79T00975A017100020001-9

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Current Situation



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Cambodia: The Communists continue to harass government positions south of Phnom Penh. A Cambodian military spokesman in the capital reported that the enemy made a ground attack on the district town of Saang, some 20 miles southeast of Phnom Penh, on 3 September. Government forces still hold the town, however, and have suffered few losses. West of Saang, the enemy yesterday shelled the town of Tram Khnar, on Route 3, but damage was light. Large numbers of Communist troops apparently still are in position around Tram Khnar, but thus far they have made no attempt to overrun it.

Use of Cambodian Communist Troops

25X1

villagers from the Prek Tameak area, northeast of the city, have claimed that ethnic Cambodians made up two thirds of the enemy force that attacked Prek Tameak late last month. They reportedly told the villagers their mission was to infiltrate close to the capital. Village headmen gave them food and shelter, and some local youths allegedly joined the Communists because of their hostility toward both South Vietnamese and government troops, who had engaged in looting and other abuses.

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At the time of the battle for Prek Tameak, the Cambodians apparently believed that the attacking force was made up primarily of Vietnamese Communists.

According to a press account, however, a Cambodian Army officer said yesterday that a recent enemy attack east of Phnom Penh was carried out by Cambodian Communists. He possibly was referring to Prek Tameak.

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South Vietnam: Recent demonstrations by veterans in Saigon apparently have convinced the government that it must adopt tougher measures to deal with them.

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On 3 September, shootings between the police and veterans occurred twice, resulting in several wounded on each side; three US military policemen were also wounded. Army troops had to be called in to augment police forces and to help push the veterans out of an abandoned government building they had seized earlier this week. Those involved in this demonstration apparently belong to the more militant of the disabled veterans' groups, whose activities have become progressively more lawless in recent weeks.

The government had been reluctant to adopt a forceful stand toward agitating veterans because it knew they were likely to have the sympathy of the army.

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Communist China: Peking has taken the final step in normalizing its military high command in the wake of the Cultural Revolution by appointing a new director for the army's top political organ.

At a reception in Peking this week, alternate politburo member Li Te-sheng was identified as the director of the General Political Department, once the primary overseer of the army's fealty to the Chinese Communist Party. During the Cultural Revolution the department had become a battleground for forces seeking to purge high military officers, and it has not functioned normally since 1967.

Li Te-sheng's appointment reinforces other indications within the past few months that the General Political Department is beginning to resume at least some of its pre-Cultural Revolution duties, which included political control over all personnel in China's armed forces.

Li's appointment comes at a time when the central authorities have been showing signs of dissatisfaction with the performance of many of the local military officers who dominate the present administrative machinery in China's provinces. Only last month, for example, Peking radio harshly condemned indications of "irresponsibility toward the party's cause" and weak political indoctrination among many local army men. These strictures seemed to question the fitness of some military officers for holding party posts within the army and by implication certain officers on the new party committees that are gradually being formed throughout the country. Such public criticism of the army's performance suggests that the new director of the General Political Department may come under considerable pressure from forces within the top leadership who are at odds over the extent of the army's future responsibilities in provincial administration.

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Nevertheless, as both local army commander and head of the government of Anhwei Province, Li's acceptability in his new post to China's powerful provincial military figures was probably an important consideration in his appointment. Relatively little is known of Li's personal political inclinations, and he may be something of an opportunist. His background, however, as a tactical commander rather than as a political officer, and his record of opposing Cultural Revolution excesses in his bailiwick suggest that his appointment does not signal a downgrading of professional military concerns. [redacted]

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Jordan: Amman remains generally quiet but tense following King Husayn's appeal for order Thursday night.

The King's brief speech, full of praise for the army and sympathy for the ordinary Jordanian citizen, seems to have been largely designed to buy time. As he has often done in times of crisis in the past, the King sought to adopt a position of impartiality and placed actual responsibility for handling the situation on the shoulders of the cabinet.

He asked the cabinet to get in touch with the fedayeen central committee to urge it to exert control over the commando groups--an indication that the fedayeen will probably continue to have considerable leeway for self-discipline. According to the King, the government and the fedayeen leadership were to work jointly to "contain the sedition" and ensure public safety.

After the situation is under control, the cabinet is to turn to implementing the agreement of 10 July between the government and the fedayeen. Because that agreement included provisions prohibiting the presence of armed fedayeen or fedayeen bases in cities, its enforcement could well be impossible without a major military operation. The King made no threats indicating that he might be considering such a step, but he went out of his way to heap praise on the army and on his chief of staff, which was probably intended to serve as a warning to the fedayeen.

According to Radio Amman, talks were held between government and fedayeen leaders Thursday night and Friday, but no results were announced. Although isolated incidents will probably continue--any of which could easily get out of hand--negotiations could drag on for some time without concrete results.

USSR - Communist China - UN: Moscow has increased its backstage efforts to keep Peking out of the UN.

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the USSR has warned Brussels not to advance its "two Chinas" draft resolution at the coming session of the General Assembly. The Belgian proposal would give Taiwan's seat on the Security Council to Communist China, while allowing the Nationalists to remain in the Assembly. The Soviets have told the Belgians, perhaps through an intermediary, that they would be "embarrassed" by Peking's presence on the Security Council. Moreover, Moscow made it clear that it would consider the initiative an affront and threatened to work against Belgium's candidacy for a seat on the Security Council should Brussels persist with its proposal.

For the last few years, Soviet diplomats have used low-key tactics in making known Moscow's opposition to Peking's possible admission. Last year, for example, the Soviets voted for the Albanian resolution, which called for the complete removal of Taiwan from the UN in favor of Peking, but for the first time did not speak in favor of its admission.

The Soviet representations--even if indirect--demonstrate Moscow's concern over the potential appeal of the Belgian proposal, which in fact has generated little support so far and may not even be formally introduced this year. Moscow probably wants to ensure that it is not presented in order to avoid the need to lobby more aggressively against Peking's admission. Moscow probably is also concerned that the Belgian proposal might stimulate other troublesome approaches to the China problem.

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Chile: Marxist candidate Salvador Allende was holding a slight lead in a very close race over independent conservative candidate Jorge Alessandri with about 75 percent of the vote counted.

Christian Democratic candidate Tomic has officially conceded defeat. Neither Allende nor Alessandri will win a plurality. Allende is receiving about 36 percent of the vote to Alessandri's 35 percent. Congress, therefore, will have to choose between the two when it meets on 24 October. Inauguration of the new president is to take place on 4 November.

Allende's coalition has 82 votes in the 200-member congress, and Alessandri can be assured of at least 43 votes. How the 75 Christian Democrats will vote is uncertain. In order to win, a candidate must receive a majority of the votes of at least 101 members on the first ballot. If neither of the candidates receives such a majority, another vote is taken and the candidate need win only a majority of those attending and voting.

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Bolivia - Latin America: There is increasing evidence of international participation with the Bolivian guerrillas.

A Bolivian Army communiqué states that in a clash with the Army of National Liberation (ELN) on 1 September a Chilean was killed. The dead guerrilla, the second Chilean killed in the guerrilla area, was identified as a former member of Chile's national police.

The ELN has made no secret of the many non-Bolivians who have joined them and has stressed the importance of collaboration among Latin American revolutionaries. [redacted]

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Ceylon: The recent nationalization of Western-owned oil properties apparently results from an agreement between the government and the companies.

The Bandaranaike government announced on 2 September that it had nationalized the remaining properties of an American and a British oil company. The properties were used only for bunkering, as domestic petroleum distribution facilities were nationalized in 1962-63. The announcement added that the companies would be paid following determination of the amount by a compensation board.

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Developments were far different during the oil nationalizations in the early 1960s. The government at that time, also led by Mrs. Bandaranaike, failed to compensate the Western companies, which led to a suspension of US economic assistance in February 1963 and a crisis in US-Ceylonese relations.

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Arab States: Arab moderates in Lebanon are increasingly pessimistic over prospects for a Middle Eastern settlement, according to the US Embassy in Beirut. Factors contributing to the gloomy assessment include the Israeli allegations of Egyptian cease-fire violations, which the Lebanese view as merely a pretext to avoid negotiations, and Tel Aviv's newly acquired military hardware. Although the US peace initiative is regarded in moderate circles as the most "even-handed" US action since the 1967 war, there is also "almost unanimous" speculation that Washington will supply Israel with additional offensive military equipment. The Lebanese attitude probably typifies moderate opinion throughout the Arab world, and is a measure of the fatalistic feeling on both sides of the Arab-Israeli struggle.

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